
Volume 12 | Issue 2

Summer 2009

Countering Anti-Immigration Extremism: The Southern Poverty Law Center's Strategies

Heidi Beirich
Southern Poverty Law Center

Mark Potok
Southern Poverty Law Center

Follow this and additional works at: <https://academicworks.cuny.edu/clr>

 Part of the [Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Heidi Beirich & Mark Potok, *Countering Anti-Immigration Extremism: The Southern Poverty Law Center's Strategies*, 12 N.Y. City L. Rev. 405 (2009).
Available at: 10.31641/clr120206

The CUNY Law Review is published by the Office of Library Services at the City University of New York. For more information please contact cunylr@law.cuny.edu.

COUNTERING ANTI-IMMIGRATION EXTREMISM: THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER'S STRATEGIES

*Heidi Beirich & Mark Potok**

At the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, it became increasingly clear that the United States was seeing the rise of a xenophobic and ostensibly racist anti-immigration movement. This nativist wave was, unsurprisingly, accompanied by a rise since 2000 of more than fifty percent in the number of hate groups listed by the Southern Poverty Law Center ("SPLC"), as well as a rise in anti-Latino hate crimes.¹ The SPLC spent much of the next decade pushing back against this nativist wave, hoping to avoid the extremism and considerable violence that has occurred alongside such xenophobic outbursts in the past.

The origins of the SPLC's work in this area date back to late 1998, when a small gathering in Cullman, Alabama, drew the attention of staffers. At a protest that featured the burning of Mexican and United Nations flags and the arrest of a former state Klan official, a leader of the allegedly more mainstream Federation for American Immigration Reform ("FAIR")² was spotted. A brief item in the SPLC's quarterly covering the radical right, *Intelligence Report* ("the *Report*"), noted the event and the presence of Glenn Spencer, a leading activist behind California's controversial anti-immigrant Proposition 187.³

That small item became the starting point for a series of inves-

* Heidi Beirich is Director of Research for the Intelligence Project at the Southern Poverty Law Center. Mark Potok is Director of the Intelligence Project at the Southern Poverty Law Center.

¹ See FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, HATE CRIME STATISTICS 2003, <http://www.fbi.gov/filelink.html?file=/ucr/03hc.pdf>; FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, HATE CRIME STATISTICS 2004, available at <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/hc2004/tables/HateCrime2004.pdf>; Federal Bureau of Investigation Hate Crime Statistics 2005, <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/hc2005/index.html> (last visited Mar. 5, 2009); Federal Bureau of Investigation Hate Crime Statistics 2006, <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/hc2006/index.html> (last visited Mar. 5, 2009); Federal Bureau of Investigation, Hate Crime Statistics 2007, available at <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/hc2007/index.html> (last visited Mar. 5, 2009).

² See The Federation for American Immigration Reform, <http://www.fairus.org/site/PageServer> (last visited Mar. 5, 2009).

³ *Right Meets Far Right*, INTELLIGENCE REPORT (S. Poverty Law Ctr., Montgomery, Ala.), Winter 1998, available at <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=463>.

tigative forays into the world of American anti-immigration groups. Over the following years, the *Report* would document and publish extensive evidence on the cross-pollination of white supremacist hate groups and the larger immigration restriction movement.⁴ By 2005, staffers had exposed a number of racist elements in the movement; written an exposé on the little-known fact that one man—anti-immigrant impresario John Tanton—was behind nearly every anti-immigration group of note;⁵ become key players in exposing and then campaigning against the attempted takeover of a key environmentalist group, the Sierra Club, by anti-immigration zealots; and taken on CNN anchor Lou Dobbs over his anti-immigrant scaremongering.⁶ From 2005 to 2008, staffers worked to expose racist elements in the vigilante Minuteman Project⁷ and related groups that were popping up around the country with staggering regularity. The investigative research would lead to three different civil suits against border vigilantes or vigilante groups, all of which resulted in crippling financial awards.

After the 1998 flag burning, a second event, in early 2000, seemed to confirm that the hard edge of the nativist movement was growing and was increasingly coming to embrace open racism. That May, a major gathering of anti-immigration activists was held in Sierra Vista, Arizona, to celebrate two ranchers—Roger and Donald Barnett—who were boasting of rounding up thousands of border-crossing migrants at gunpoint on their ranch and handing them over to the authorities.⁸ More than 250 people showed up in a motel conference room to listen to Barbara Coe, head of the hate group California Coalition for Immigration Reform⁹ and another key Proposition 187 supporter, rail against “alien savages.”¹⁰ The events in Cullman and Sierra Vista seemed to be part of a pattern, and the *Report* began an investigation of possible links between

⁴ *Blood on the Border*, INTELLIGENCE REPORT (S. Poverty Law Ctr., Montgomery, Ala.), Spring 2001, available at <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=230> [hereinafter *Blood on the Border*].

⁵ *The Puppeteer*, INTELLIGENCE REPORT (S. Poverty Law Ctr., Montgomery, Ala.), Summer 2002, available at <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?pid=180> [hereinafter *The Puppeteer*].

⁶ *Hostile Takeover*, INTELLIGENCE REPORT (S. Poverty Law Ctr., Montgomery, Ala.), Spring 2004, available at <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=379>.

⁷ See Jim Gilchrist’s Minuteman Project, <http://www.minutemanproject.com> (last visited Mar. 5, 2009).

⁸ *Blood on the Border*, *supra* note 4.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ See California Coalition for Immigration Reform, <http://ccir.net/> (last visited Mar. 9, 2009).

hate groups and the anti-immigration movement.¹¹

It was the beginning of a major project. Over the following years, nearly every *Report* staffer would be involved in exposing the increasingly violent and racist aspects of the anti-immigration movement. Ultimately, our research revealed a tight-knit and interlocking network tying hate groups, in particular the Council of Conservative Citizens (“CCC”) (a group built on the mailing lists of the old White Citizens Councils that fought desegregation and is virulently racist), to several prominent anti-immigration activists.¹² Emblematic of this relationship was a panel held at a 1999 CCC conference that featured Spencer and the leaders of three other well-known anti-immigration organizations: Wayne Lutton of The Social Contract Press; John Vinson of the American Immigration Control Foundation; and Virginia Abernethy of Population-Environment Balance. Not long after Abernethy and Lutton joined the editorial advisory board of *Citizens Informer*, the racist tabloid published by the CCC began to concentrate heavily on the evils of non-white immigration. This research ultimately led to the *Report*’s first major story, published in 1999, on what was then still a nascent movement. It also led SPLC to list in 2001 as hate groups three nativist outfits that employed particularly racist rhetoric: Spencer’s American Patrol,¹³ Vinson’s American Immigration Control Foundation,¹⁴ and The Social Contract Press,¹⁵ run by Lutton and John Tanton.

In early 2002, the *Report* expanded its research into the anti-immigration movement. For four months, a staffer teased out the financing and connections between the leading anti-immigration organizations in the United States. What tax records revealed was quite remarkable—the American anti-immigration movement was largely the creation of a Michigan ophthalmologist named John Tanton, whom the 2002 *Report* cover story would dub “The Puppe-

¹¹ The SPLC would help fund a lawsuit in 2006 against the Barnett brothers for terrorizing a Latino family of U.S. citizens at gunpoint. The civil trial ended in a judgment of nearly \$100,000 against Roger Barnett. Southern Poverty Law Center, *Border Vigilante Ordered to Pay Damages in SPLC-Sponsored Suit*, <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/news/item.jsp?aid=93> (last visited Mar. 9, 2009).

¹² *Blood on the Border*, *supra* note 4.

¹³ See American Border Patrol, <http://www.americanborderpatrol.com/about.html> (last visited Mar. 9, 2009).

¹⁴ See American Immigration Control Foundation, <http://www.aicfoundation.com/index.html> (last visited Mar. 9, 2009).

¹⁵ See The Social Contract Press, <http://www.thesocialcontract.com/index.html> (last visited Mar. 9, 2009).

teer.”¹⁶ The fact that one man was so central to this movement was interesting, but Tanton’s history of bigotry toward Latinos and his close associations with white supremacist activists were critical; most modern immigration restriction groups had been founded or fostered by individuals with racist views. In 2008, SPLC’s investigative research was bolstered by yet another *Report* article that proved conclusively that Tanton was a committed racist with deep connections to the white nationalist movement.¹⁷

Interestingly, Tanton came to immigration issues from the left. A Sierra Club activist from the late 1960s, Tanton was highly concerned with population growth in the United States and, for a time, headed the Sierra Club’s Population Committee.¹⁸ By the late 1970s, Tanton had decided immigration was the real cause of most environmental degradation. Tanton has openly said that one of his main inspirations for taking on immigration was *The Camp of the Saints*, a racist French novel that lays out a lurid vision of dark-skinned Third World hordes destroying European civilization.¹⁹ In the 1994 edition of the book published by Tanton, a special afterword from author Jean Raspail made the racist claim that the “proliferation of other races dooms our race . . . to extinction.”²⁰ Tanton clearly embraced Raspail’s view of the deadly threat to white civilization. When it was published, Tanton wrote that he was “honored” to republish the Frenchman’s race war novel.

In the late 1970s, the *Report* research showed, Tanton had begun to build a multi-organizational movement that created the most important anti-immigration lobbying organizations: the Federation for American Immigration Reform (“FAIR”), the Center for Immigration Studies (“CIS”)²¹ and NumbersUSA.²² He laid out his strategy in 1986 in secret memos that proposed, among other things, the creation of multiple think tanks to focus on the negative effects of immigration. Unfortunately for Tanton, his memos

¹⁶ *The Puppeteer*, *supra* note 5.

¹⁷ Heidi Beirich, *The Tanton Files: Nativist Leader’s Racist Past Exposed*, INTELLIGENCE REPORT (S. Poverty Law Ctr., Montgomery, Ala.), Winter 2008, available at <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=981>.

¹⁸ See Right Web, Profile: John Tanton, <http://rightweb.irc-online.org/profile/1360.html> (last visited Mar. 9, 2009).

¹⁹ *The Puppeteer*, *supra* note 5. See generally JEAN RASPAIL, *THE CAMP OF THE SAINTS* (Social Contract Press 1994).

²⁰ Southern Poverty Law Center, Fear and Fantasy, <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?sid=172> (last visited Mar. 9, 2009).

²¹ See Center for Immigration Studies, <http://www.cis.org/> (last visited Mar. 9, 2009).

²² See NumbersUSA, <http://www.numbersusa.com/content/> (last visited Mar. 9, 2009).

were also marked by anti-Latino bigotry, something made public when they were leaked to the *Arizona Republic* in 1988.²³ Several prominent persons, including newsman Walter Cronkite and conservative Republican Linda Chavez, left their positions at Tanton's U.S. English as a result of the disclosures. Tanton, too, quit as the group's chairman.²⁴ But the negative publicity didn't deter Tanton's ambitious work in organizing a crackdown on immigration. Between 1980 and 2002, Tanton had a hand in either the founding or the funding of thirteen anti-immigration groups, many of them well known.²⁵ And staffers found that many of these organizations inflated membership numbers and nearly all relied on a very narrow donor base, most notably foundations run by the far-right financier, Richard Mellon Scaife, or members of his family. They also found that Tanton employed and shared his office in Michigan with racist activist Wayne Lutton, with whom he had worked since the early 1990s. Lutton has been a member of the CCC editorial board, an adviser to another white supremacist publication, *The Occidental Quarterly*, and a writer for the Holocaust-denying *Journal of Historical Review*.

Of continuing concern were ongoing reports from the border that indicated vigilante activity was on the rise. In a series of e-mails obtained by the SPLC in 2002, the vigilante and racist nature of Ranch Rescue, which conducted armed border patrols and whose actions included alleged attacks on migrants, were laid out.²⁶ Ultimately, the *Report's* investigative work on Ranch Rescue also paid off in the form of a lawsuit by the SPLC legal department that shut the group down. In June 2003, the SPLC, with the help of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund and the law firms of Ricardo de Anda and John Judge, sued Ranch Rescue, three of its members including leader Jack Foote, and Texas ranch owner Joseph Sutton.²⁷ On behalf of six plaintiffs from Mexico and El Salvador, the suit accused Texas rancher Jo-

²³ Memorandum from John Tanton to WITAN IV Attendees (Oct. 10, 1986), <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?sid=125>.

²⁴ *The Puppeteer*, *supra* note 5.

²⁵ *John Tanton's Network*, INTELLIGENCE REPORT (S. Poverty Law Ctr., Montgomery, Ala.), Summer 2002, available at <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?sid=72>.

²⁶ *Open Season*, INTELLIGENCE REPORT (S. Poverty Law Ctr., Montgomery, Ala.), Spring 2003, available at <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?pid=52>.

²⁷ *Leiva v. Ranch Rescue*, INTELLIGENCE REPORT (S. Poverty Law Ctr., Montgomery, Ala.), available at <http://www.splcenter.org/legal/docket/files.jsp?cdrID=44> (last visited Mar. 5, 2009).

seph Sutton and heavily armed members of Ranch Rescue clothed in camouflage uniforms of accosting the migrants and abusing them physically and emotionally. In the end, Sutton's insurance carrier settled the claim against him while a Ranch Rescue member, Casey Nethercott, was forced to give up a paramilitary training compound he had set up on a piece of land on the Arizona-Mexico border to settle the \$350,000 assessed against him.²⁸

Another battle in this long campaign also broke out in 2003, when a *Report* staffer noticed a small ad in *The Social Contract*, the journal produced by the publishing house run by Tanton. The ad suggested that readers join the Sierra Club, the largest environmentalist group in America, in time to vote early the next year in the group's board elections. Tanton had written in 1986 of taking over the Sierra Club in a bid to demonstrate that opposition to immigration came from the left as well as the right, and it seemed that just such an attempt was under way. It wouldn't be the first time. In 1998, a Tanton ally, a group then called Sierrans for U.S. Population Stabilization ("SUSPS"), had pushed a club resolution calling for closing down the borders in order to maintain an unsullied environment. Amid much talk of "the greening of hate,"²⁹ the resolution was voted down by a margin of 60 to 40%.

The 1998 loss didn't stop SUSPS. Instead of pushing further initiatives, SUSPS began putting its supporters up for the Sierra Club board. By 2003, they had been so successful in this strategy that three men linked to Tanton and backed by SUSPS were running for the club's board in the hopes of winning a majority that could change the club's long-held position of neutrality on immigration.

Drastic measures were called for, and the SPLC responded, sending an October 2003 letter to Sierra Club President Larry Fahn warning that the club faced a "hostile takeover" attempt by nativists.³⁰ Pushing for more publicity on the SUSPS campaign, the *Report* published the letter to Fahn and an interview with a club board director discussing the past and present takeover attempts.

²⁸ *Leiva v. Ranch Rescue*, CC-03-77 (Tex. 229th Dist. June 26, 2003); Southern Poverty Law Center, *Paramilitary Compound Goes to SPLC Clients*, http://www.splcenter.org/legal/news/article.jsp?site_area=1&aid=157 (last visited Mar. 5, 2009).

²⁹ See John Leo, *A Really Ugly Shade of Green*, U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT, Apr. 5, 2004, at 76 (quoting then Sierra Club Executive Director Carl Pope as describing the "splinter group" as "a virus").

³⁰ Letter from Mark Potok, Editor, *Intelligence Report* to Larry Fahn, President, Sierra Club (Oct. 21, 2003), http://www.splcenter.org/images/dynamic/main/Potok_Sierra_letter.pdf.

Several major newspaper stories detailed the SPLC's opposition to the three SUSPS candidates.³¹ But staffers worried that that might not be enough to reach most of the club's 750,000 members. As a result, a decision was made to ask Morris Dees, the well-known civil rights lawyer and co-founder of SPLC, to run for the club's board as a way of bringing additional attention to the purported takeover attempt. Dees only ran so that he could produce a candidate's statement that would go out to all club members suggesting that they not vote for the three SUSPS candidates. His ballot statement read: "I am not asking that you vote for me. Instead, I am running to urge that you vote against the 'greening of hate' and against those candidates backed by SUSPS. Please save the Sierra Club from a takeover by the radical right."³²

After the SPLC letter arrived, a group of Sierra Club members formed their own group, Groundswell Sierra, to oppose the three nativist candidates. Using SPLC research, Groundswell Sierra waged a publicity campaign that was highly effective, endorsing a slate of candidates who believed the club should focus on the environment alone. And thirteen former club presidents signed an open letter denouncing the takeover attempt. In the end, 171,000 members of the club voted—the highest total in the group's history—and the three SUSPS candidates were defeated by margins of 10 to 1, despite the fact that at least some of them had been expected to win.³³

The battle with immigration extremists continued in the years that followed, as vigilante groups exploded across the country. Many news commentators and talk radio hosts participated in the spreading of false and defamatory propaganda about immigrants.³⁴ In 2007, SPLC staffers decided to take on CNN anchor Lou Dobbs over his repeated promotion of falsehoods about immigrants and his popularizing of nativist extremists during his daily segment on

³¹ Felicity Barringer, *Bitter Division for Sierra Club on Immigration*, N.Y. TIMES, Mar. 16, 2004, at A1.

³² Southern Poverty Law Center, *Morris Dees' Sierra Club Candidate Statement Seeks Tolerance*, <http://www.splcenter.org/news/item.jsp?aid=47> (last visited Mar. 5, 2009).

³³ Southern Poverty Law Center, *Anti-Immigration Candidates Rejected in Sierra Club Election*, <http://www.splcenter.org/news/item.jsp?aid=61> (last visited Mar. 5, 2009).

³⁴ Heidi Beirich, *The Paranoid Style Redux*, INTELLIGENCE REPORT (S. Poverty Law Ctr., Montgomery, Ala.), Summer 2007, available at <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=797>; Heidi Beirich, *Getting Immigration Facts Straight*, INTELLIGENCE REPORT (S. Poverty Law Ctr., Montgomery, Ala.), Summer 2007, available at <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?sid=415>.

immigration, “Broken Borders.”³⁵ Publicly attacking Dobbs signaled a major change in tactics for the SPLC. In 2004, after a staffer saw that Dobbs seemed truly perplexed when a guest on his show claimed “illegal immigrants” were invading the United States, the SPLC reached out to Dobbs with an offer to discuss with him the rising nativism and xenophobia SPLC had been tracking, including a particularly popular conspiracy called the Aztlan theory. The theory argues, as his guest had, that Latino immigrants come to the United States not to work, but to invade and “reconquer” the Southwest for Mexico. Dobbs ultimately decided to send three producers, a reporter and an interview booker to SPLC headquarters in Montgomery, Alabama, for a presentation in November 2004 on the extremism of the anti-immigrant movement.

The behind-the-scenes strategy didn’t work. By the following year, it was abundantly clear that Dobbs had not taken the SPLC’s advice to stop interviewing members of hate groups and had begun regularly pumping out anti-immigrant propaganda. As a result, in April 2005 the *Report* published an exposé of extremists Dobbs had on his show since the SPLC visit.³⁶ They included hate group leaders Glenn Spencer and Barbara Coe, along with Joe McCutchen, who had spoken to the CCC and written a series of anti-Semitic letters to his local paper. SPLC’s criticisms of Dobbs were followed in May 2007 by a profile of Dobbs by CBS’ *60 Minutes* in which correspondent Lesley Stahl reported that in 2005, CNN reporter Christine Romans “told Dobbs that there have been 7,000 cases of leprosy in the United States in the past three years.” (Stahl also interviewed an SPLC official who criticized Dobbs’s reporting.) In her piece, Stahl pointed out that the government had actually reported that there were 7,000 cases of leprosy that had accumulated in America over thirty years, not three. In the three years referenced by Romans, in fact, the government registered just 398 new cases. “If we reported it, it’s a fact,” Dobbs responded defiantly. He was asked how he could guarantee that. He replied, “Because I’m the managing editor, and that’s the way we do business. We don’t make up numbers, Lesley. Do we?”³⁷

But SPLC knew from its research that the leprosy numbers, in

³⁵ Southern Poverty Law Center, *Center Urges CNN to Retract False Reporting by Lou Dobbs*, <http://www.splcenter.org/news/item.jsp?aid=254> (last visited Mar. 5, 2009).

³⁶ *Broken Record*, INTELLIGENCE REPORT (S. Poverty Law Ctr., Montgomery, Ala.), Winter 2005, available at <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=589>.

³⁷ Southern Poverty Law Center, *Bait and Switch*, <http://www.splcenter.org/news/item.jsp?aid=260> (last visited Mar. 5, 2009).

addition to being faulty, were produced by Madeleine Cosman, who was described by Romans as “a respected medical lawyer.” In fact, Cosman was a woman who repeatedly ranted about Latino men raping boys, girls and nuns, and who had no medical training whatsoever.³⁸ To draw attention to Dobb’s scaremongering, the SPLC decided in mid-May of 2008 to make an issue of his faulty reporting by running ads in *The New York Times* and *USA Today*. The ads asked CNN to retract Dobb’s false leprosy claim, as Dobb himself refused to do so. On its website, the SPLC also pointed out that Dobb had reported several other falsehoods about immigrants on his program.³⁹ Dobb never ran a correction nor was he disciplined publicly by CNN. He was, however, pilloried by his colleagues at publications such as *Columbia Journalism Review* and *Editor & Publisher* for failing to meet basic journalistic standards in his reporting.⁴⁰ In perhaps the most devastating critique, *New York Times* writer David Leonhardt wrote that Dobb had a “somewhat flexible relationship with reality.”⁴¹ Even the satirical show *The Colbert Report* chimed in, mocking Dobb for his immigrant bashing.⁴²

In July 2006, another horrific anti-Latino hate crime occurred when a young man, mistaken for Latino, was attacked by members of the Imperial Klans of America (“IKA”),⁴³ which SPLC had listed as a hate group for several years. Jordon Gruver, whose mother is a white Kentuckian and whose father is a Puma Indian from Panama, was a slight, 15-year-old who was called an “illegal spic” and beaten to the ground, kicked with steel-toed boots, and left with permanent injuries while attending a fair in rural Kentucky. The IKA is one of the more extreme hate groups, with a leader, Ron Edwards, who regularly preached hatred against immigrants, blacks and Jews. Rather than try to curb the dangerous tendencies of his followers, Edwards poured fuel on their fire by preaching hatred, demonizing minorities, and glorifying violence. Members were urged to send Mexicans “back in boxes” and to show “no mercy” to

³⁸ Southern Poverty Law Center, *Center Urges CNN to Retract False Reporting by Lou Dobbs*, <http://www.splcenter.org/news/item.jsp?aid=254> (last visited Mar. 5, 2009).

³⁹ Southern Poverty Law Center, *Errors and Extremist Sources on Lou Dobbs Tonight*, <http://www.splcenter.org/news/item.jsp?sid=94> (last visited Mar. 5, 2009).

⁴⁰ See, e.g., Dean Starkman, *Of Lepers and Lou Dobbs*, COLUM. JOURNALISM REV., May 30, 2007, available at http://www.cjr.org/the_audit/of_lepers_and_lou_dobbs.php; *Lou Dobbs Responds to ‘Scurrilous’ Attack by ‘NYT.’ EDITOR & PUBLISHER*, May 31, 2007, at page unavailable.

⁴¹ David Leonhardt, *Truth, Fiction and Lou Dobbs*, N.Y. TIMES, May 30, 2007, at C1, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/30/business/30leonhardt.html>.

⁴² *The Colbert Report* (Comedy Central television broadcast May 23, 2007).

⁴³ Imperial Klans of America, <http://www.kkkk.net> (last visited Mar. 9, 2009).

“spics.”⁴⁴

In an attempt to secure some redress for Gruver, who suffered serious injuries, and to call attention to the rising tide of hate and violence against Latinos and immigrants, the SPLC sued the IKA in civil court arguing that Edwards was responsible for the actions of his members, who were on an IKA recruiting drive at the time of the assault. The case aimed to hold Edwards accountable for an attack that was perpetrated by members of his group. As in all of our hate cases, the hope was to win a verdict large enough to shut down the organization, which in 2006 had twenty-three chapters in seventeen states. In November 2008, a jury awarded a \$2.5 million judgment to Gruver, a sum the SPLC was working to collect at press time.⁴⁵ The impact on the group has been serious; as of late 2008, the IKA was down to six chapters in five states.

Since 2007, the SPLC has concentrated on working closely with allies in the immigrant rights community to help educate the public on the hate motivating the nativist movement. In October 2007, SPLC staffers met for the first time at the Washington, D.C., offices of the Center for American Progress (“CAP”) with other civil rights organizations, such as the National Council of La Raza (“NCLR”) and the Center for New Community, concerned about the rising tide of hate against Latinos. That meeting and two that followed concentrated on how to thwart the efforts of groups like FAIR from injecting their racism into the debate over immigration reform. One result was the NCLR website, wecanstopthehate.org, which uses materials from the SPLC about nativist groups to educate the public about the rising tide of hate against Latinos and immigrants. Also featured on the website are videos about the nativist movement featuring two SPLC staffers. (The website also features helpful materials from other organizations involved in the CAP meetings as well as original content produced by NCLR.)

As part of this effort, the SPLC produced four investigative reports on the national level anti-immigration movement. The first documented the hateful record of FAIR, particularly that of its founder and current board member Tanton, as well as statements by several of its leaders.⁴⁶ The report resulted in the SPLC listing FAIR as a hate group in December 2007. This work was followed

⁴⁴ *Crushing the Klan*, INTELLIGENCE REPORT (S. Poverty Law Ctr., Montgomery, Ala.), Spring 2009, available at <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=999>.

⁴⁵ *Gruver v. Imperial Klans of America*, No. 07-CI-00082 (Ky. 1st Div. Nov. 14, 2008).

⁴⁶ *The Teflon Nativists*, INTELLIGENCE REPORT (S. Poverty Law Ctr., Montgomery,

by an in-depth look at Tanton, using personal papers he lodged at the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, which showed conclusively that Tanton was a committed racist with deep connections to the white nationalist movement.⁴⁷ That report also revealed that Tanton had shared anti-Semitic materials with FAIR's board, vacationed with a leader of the Pioneer Fund (a eugenicist group once described as neo-Nazi), and had founded his own outfit to push eugenics, the pseudo-science of weeding out human "genetic inferiority" through selective breeding that was utterly discredited by the Nazis.

In October 2008, attendees of the first CAP meeting met again at their offices for a day-long gathering that had been expanded to include several other concerned organizations, such as the Anti-Defamation League and America's Voice, which supports comprehensive immigration reform. At that second meeting, the SPLC decided to pursue further research into Tanton's personal papers to tease out the role he played in creating two major restrictionist organizations, the Center for Immigration Studies ("CIS") and NumbersUSA. Those groups are often not associated with Tanton, though both were his idea and were nurtured by him for years after their founding.

The result of that research was a report, "The Nativist Lobby," that included the earlier reports on FAIR and Tanton as well as two new studies on CIS and NumbersUSA.⁴⁸ The report made the point that these three Washington, D.C.-based immigration-restriction organizations stand at the nexus of the American nativist movement and that, although on the surface they appear quite different—FAIR is the country's best-known anti-immigrant lobbying group; CIS presents itself as an "independent" think tank; and NumbersUSA is a powerful grassroots organizer—the fact of the matter is that they are fruits of the same poisonous tree. The *New York Times* pointed out in an online editorial that the report conclusively proved that all of these groups have "histories connecting them to a retired Michigan eye doctor with a long-held interest in

Ala.), Winter 2007, available at <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=846>.

⁴⁷ Southern Poverty Law Center, *The Tanton Files*, INTELLIGENCE REPORT (S. Poverty Law Ctr., Montgomery, Ala.), Winter 2008, available at <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=981>.

⁴⁸ S. POVERTY LAW CTR., THE NATIVIST LOBBY: THREE FACES OF INTOLERANCE (Feb. 2009), http://www.splcenter.org/pdf/static/splc_nativistlobby_022009.pdf.

eugenics, racial quotas, and white nationalism.”⁴⁹ Not long after the report was released, two SPLC staffers traveled to Washington, D.C., for a staff briefing, hosted by the Progressive Caucus and America’s Voice, to publicize the report to those who would be considering immigration issues in the 111th Congress. The hope is that their poisoned views will not infect the debate over America’s immigration policies.

The SPLC will continue its publishing and legal efforts to battle the rising tide of nativism and xenophobia that has greeted the arrival of this new century and a new wave of immigrants, this time mostly from Latin America. Unfortunately, some of America’s most shameful historical periods have involved racism and hatred directed at immigrants, whether it be the nearly four million strong “second era” Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s raging against Catholic immigrants from Ireland and Italy, or the despicable Immigration Act of 1924 that imposed national origin quotas and banned Asian immigrants. This history of racism and hatred towards immigrants is an unfortunate stain on our past and one that we should do whatever we can to not repeat.

⁴⁹ Editorial, *The Nativist Lobby*, N.Y. TIMES, Feb. 4, 2009, available at <http://theboard.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/02/04/the-nativist-lobby>.